
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 476 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY A. WILLIAMS, BREWSTER AND AUMENT, APRIL 30, 2019

REFERRED TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, APRIL 30, 2019

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Pennsylvania Advisory Commission on Greater
2 Father Family Involvement within the Department of Human
3 Services and providing for its powers and duties.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Greater
8 Father Family Involvement Act.

9 Section 2. Definitions.

10 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
11 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
12 context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 "Commission." The Pennsylvania Advisory Commission on
14 Greater Father Family Involvement.

15 "Department." The Department of Human Services of the
16 Commonwealth.

17 Section 3. Findings and declaration of policy.

18 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

19 (1) In the absence of public policy that promotes

1 greater father involvement and sustainability in the life of
2 their children, too many children will likely not have full
3 parental support to achieve economic stability and wealth
4 acquisition, and thus are unlikely to be able to maintain
5 themselves and enhance their family's well-being.

6 (2) Research shows that father involvement is associated
7 with better outcomes for child well-being.

8 (3) Fathers are role models, caretakers, providers and
9 advocates.

10 (4) When a child has the benefit of access to both a
11 mother and father, the child is more likely to exhibit
12 healthy behaviors, excel in school and achieve emotional
13 well-being.

14 (5) Approximately 24 million or 35% of the nation's
15 children are being raised in single-parent households, often
16 without access to their fathers and their emotional and
17 financial support.

18 (6) Systemic barriers are impediments to greater father
19 involvement in the lives of children and families in this
20 Commonwealth, including the following:

21 (i) Stigma linked to seeking behavioral health
22 services and the lack of prioritization among behavioral
23 health entities and staff.

24 (ii) Child support orders that often overlook
25 circumstances and obstacles to fathers' engagement with
26 families.

27 (iii) Housing, supervised independent living and
28 homelessness systems fail to prioritize fathers with
29 children.

30 (iv) The educational and support services system

1 fails to prioritize the involvement of fathers as equal
2 co-parents.

3 (7) A father's absence or noninvolvement can have a
4 negative impact on a child's well-being from birth forward,
5 including economic deprivation, higher odds of incarceration,
6 twice the odds of becoming a high school dropout, higher odds
7 of smoking, drinking and using drugs and a higher risk of
8 physical, emotional or economic neglect.

9 (8) Fathers should be fully present and engaged in
10 providing the emotional, social, physical, intellectual,
11 spiritual and financial contributions that their children
12 need to ensure safety, permanency and well-being.

13 (9) Father involvement is a protective factor for
14 children that aids in the development of resilience and
15 mitigates certain psychological and social risks in the
16 adulthood of children.

17 (10) The public policy of the Commonwealth is to end
18 systemic barriers that impede fathers in fostering supportive
19 connections with their children, establishing support
20 mechanisms to enhance the ability of fathers to assume a
21 beneficial parenting role with their children and assisting
22 men in preparing for the legal, financial and emotional
23 responsibilities of fatherhood.

24 Section 4. Pennsylvania Commission on Greater Father Family
25 Involvement.

26 (a) Establishment.--The Pennsylvania Advisory Commission to
27 Promote Greater Father Family Involvement is established as an
28 advisory commission within the department.

29 (b) Membership.--The commission shall consist of
30 commissioners who shall be appointed as follows:

1 (1) Twelve commissioners shall be appointed by the
2 Governor, not more than six of whom must be registered in the
3 same political party.

4 (2) Eight commissioners shall be appointed from the
5 General Assembly as follows:

6 (i) Two commissioners selected by the President pro
7 tempore of the Senate.

8 (ii) Two commissioners selected by the Speaker of
9 the House of Representatives.

10 (iii) Two commissioners selected by the Minority
11 Leader of the Senate.

12 (iv) Two commissioners selected by the Minority
13 Leader of the House of Representatives.

14 (3) One commissioner shall be appointed by the Chief
15 Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

16 (c) Initial terms.--The initial terms of the commissioners
17 shall be as follows:

18 (1) The commissioners appointed by the Governor shall be
19 staggered as follows:

20 (i) Four commissioners shall be appointed for an
21 initial term of one year, and then to a term of three
22 years, until their successor is appointed.

23 (ii) Four commissioners shall be appointed for an
24 initial term of two years, and then to a term of three
25 years, until their successor is appointed.

26 (iii) Four commissioners shall be appointed for a
27 term of three years, and then to a term of three years,
28 until their successor is appointed.

29 (2) The commissioners selected by the General Assembly
30 shall serve for a term coterminous with the term of the

1 appointing authority.

2 (3) The commissioner appointed by the Chief Justice
3 shall serve for a term of five years and until the successor
4 commissioner is appointed.

5 (d) Reimbursement.--The commissioners shall be reimbursed by
6 the department for all necessary and reasonable expenses
7 incurred in connection with the performance of their duties as
8 members of the commission.

9 (e) Vacancies.--A vacancy that occurs in an office of a
10 commissioner prior to the expiration of a term caused by death,
11 resignation, removal or for any other reasons shall be filled in
12 the manner prescribed in subsection (b).

13 (f) Forfeiture for nonattendance.--A commissioner who fails
14 to attend two consecutive meetings of the commission shall
15 forfeit the seat, unless the chairperson of the commission
16 receives written notification from the commissioner that the
17 absence was due to personal illness or the death or illness of
18 an immediate family member.

19 (g) Chairperson.--The Governor shall designate one of the
20 commissioners to be chairperson, who shall preside at all
21 meetings of the commission and perform all the duties and
22 functions of the chairperson. The commission may designate one
23 of the members to be the acting chairperson during the absence
24 or incapacity of the chairperson and, when so acting, the acting
25 chairperson shall have and perform all the powers and duties of
26 the chairperson.

27 (h) Other officers.--The commission may select other
28 officers as necessary to carry out the powers and duties of the
29 commission prescribed in section 5.

30 (i) Meetings.--The commission shall meet at least four times

1 per year in the City of Harrisburg, but may convene meetings at
2 other locations deemed convenient and appropriate for the
3 purposes of the commission.

4 (j) Quorum.--Eleven members of the commission shall
5 constitute a quorum, and a majority of those present shall be
6 sufficient for any official action taken by the commission.

7 (k) Open meetings.--The meetings of the commission shall be
8 conducted in accordance with the provisions of 65 Pa.C.S. Ch. 7
9 (relating to open meetings).

10 (l) Annual report.--The commission shall issue an annual
11 report to the Governor and to the General Assembly regarding
12 responsible fatherhood programs and issues within this
13 Commonwealth.

14 Section 5. Powers and duties of the commission.

15 (a) General rule.--The commission shall:

16 (1) Work with State and local government and other
17 entities through collaboration, coordination, research and
18 consultation to recognize and promote the contributions that
19 fathers make to improving societal outcomes for children and
20 families.

21 (2) Subject to subsection (b):

22 (i) Evaluate governmental programs and initiatives
23 that impact fatherhood and make recommendations regarding
24 impediments, needed improvements and successful
25 implementation of those programs and initiatives.

26 (ii) Develop a comprehensive State plan that will
27 support early connection of fathers to their children
28 beginning in the gestational stage of child development
29 throughout the life of the child.

30 (iii) Promote and continue to support programs and

1 entities that foster the following:

2 (A) Parenting programs that assist fathers in
3 preparing for, finding and securing employment.

4 (B) Parenting through skill-based educational
5 programs.

6 (C) Development of conflict resolution skills
7 training.

8 (iv) Propose changes to statutes, administrative
9 rules and regulations and policy that impede the
10 development or implementation of greater father
11 involvement measures, or that will enhance the prospect
12 of success of those measures.

13 (b) Staff and grants.--Subject to available resources, the
14 commission may employ such staff and award grants as necessary
15 to perform its duties and functions prescribed in this act.

16 (c) Reports.--The commission may issue reports regarding
17 responsible fatherhood programs and issues that the commission
18 deems will aid in understanding, evaluating or improving the
19 successful implementation of such programs and issues.

20 Section 6. Effective date.

21 This act shall take effect in 60 days.